Rockaway Borough Board of Education

103 E. Main Street, Rockaway, NJ 07866

BOARD RETREAT MEETING MINUTES

Saturday, February 28, 2026, 8:30 AM-1:00 PM

Lincoln School Cafeteria, 37 Keller Avenue, Rockaway, NJ 07866

Visit us on the Web: rockboro.org

ROCKAWAY BOROUGH SCHOOLS' MISSION STATEMENT:

The mission of the Rockaway Borough School District, a caring and diverse community, is to propel the success of each student by creating an environment that fosters self-confidence and encourages creativity through quality instruction and educational opportunities aligned with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

Motion: Dahl ***Seconded by: Hernandez*** ***Voice Vote: ALL***

1. **Call to Order: 8:30 AM**

The public portion of this meeting will be called to order at approximately 8:30 a.m. by Mr. Graf, Board President, by reading the following announcement:

"In accordance with the Open Public Meeting Act, The Rockaway Borough Board of Education has provided adequate notice of this meeting to the public by having the time, date, and location advertised in The Citizen Newspaper, posted on our website and at town hall. Official action will be taken."

2. **Board Member Roll Call:**

Mr. Michael Dougherty
Elected 2025 to 1st term (3-year seat to Dec. 31, 2028)
Mrs. Faride Hernandez
Elected 2024 to 1st term (3-year seat to Dec. 31, 2027)
Mrs. Vanessa Dorgilles
Elected 2024 to 1st term (3-year seat to Dec. 31, 2027)
Ms. Jennifer Dahl, VP
Elected 2023 to 1st term (3-year seat to Dec. 31, 2026)
Mr. Edward Graf, President
Elected 2023 to 1st term (3-year seat to Dec. 31, 2026)

Pledge of Allegiance

3. **Public Comment**

N/A

4. **Board Retreat**

- **8:30 am-8:45 am**

Welcome & Purpose

What responsibilities felt most significant during the organizational meeting?
Where do you feel least clear about your role as a board member?
Liaison Reps
HSA Meetings

1. Review retreat goals and objectives
2. Focus on governance, not operations.
3. Opening reflection: What does an effective board/administration partnership look like? Where do you believe our board is on its governance journey?

- **8:45 am - 9:30 am**

Governance Roles & Responsibilities

1. Clarifying Board vs. Administrative Roles
    a. Committee Appointments
    b. Representative/Liaison Roles
2. Identify strengths and weaknesses
3. Align expectations for communication and decision-making
    a. What decisions belong to the full board vs. committees?
4. Board agenda review - rework flow, organization, and reporting by each BOE member: Committee chair report, liaison report, and administration monthly report
5. Activity: Prepare 6-8 index cards for each person with real items pulled from the agenda.
    a. Approving substitute pay rates
    b. Invoking the Doctrine of Necessity
    c. Approving professional development travel
    d. Committee appointments
    e. Budget transfers between meetings
    f. Superintendent evaluation

Each person sorts items into Board Governance, Administration Management, Shared/Oversight

6. Where did we disagree? Why?

Goal: Clear role boundaries and fewer surprises at board meetings

- **9:30 am - 10:15 am**

Committees, Communication, and Decision Flow

1. What is the purpose of each committee?
2. How should the committee's work come back to the full board?
3. How do we prevent committee work from becoming siloed?

Create a table and divide into committee groups. Complete the tables and share out. Have sheets ready for each committee.

Committee Name	Primary Purpose	What comes to the full board?	What stays at the committee level?

Committees:

Finance/Personnel/Facilities: Mr. Graf & Mrs. Hernandez
Curriculum/Special Education: Ms. Dahl & Mrs. Dorgilles
Negotiations with RBAA: Mr. Graf & Ms. Dahl
Negotiations with RBEA: Mrs. Dorgilles & Mr. Graf
Athletic/Activities: Mr. Dougherty & Mrs. Dorgilles
Policy/Safety/Security/Tech/Strategic Planning/Retreat/Misc.: Ad Hoc

Goal: Agreed-upon committee norms and clear reporting expectations.

10:15 am - 10:30 am
Break

10:30 am-11:30 am
Strategic Deep Dive: Strengthening the Board-Superintendent Partnership
Successful Partnership Promoting Trust

1. Facilitated discussion on the following:
    a. Regular, open, purposeful communication
    b. How do we ask questions without micromanaging?
2. Planning the district's strategic planning

Goal: 3-5 concrete governance actions (not initiatives)

These actions should be behaviors, structures, or processes—not programs.
Examples: monthly governance check-ins, standing board questions protocol, committee reporting template

11:30 am-12:00 pm
Governance Priorities for 2026

1. What must the board focus on this year?
2. What can be streamlined or improved?
3. Establish timelines & follow-up structure
4. How will progress be monitored?
5. When will the board revisit?

Goal: Identify one agenda item this year that will be a standing governance check-in.

Public Voice Scenarios Worksheet Activity

12 pm-1 pm
Working Lunch & Reflections

1. One thing I will do differently as a board member.
2. What is your top takeaway from today?
3. What questions remain?
4. One governance commitment we are making as a board is…

Commitment cards:

As a board member, I commit to:

Collect, summarize, and revisit mid-year.

SUMMARY

- **Streamlined agenda sections (Section 3 - Updates)**
- **Strategic Plan plan (surveys and feedback, timelines)**
- **Alignment on operations, documents, agendas**
- **Alignment on expectations on committee interactions and norms**

5. **Motion to Adjourn Meeting**- 1:00 PM

Motion: Dorgilles ***Seconded by: Hernandez*** ***Voice Vote: ALL***